

2nd Sunday of Easter - B

I'm sure we've all been involved in encounters or conversations that did not go well. Perhaps we lost our temper, or maybe we caved in, or shied away from what was being asked of us or offered.

The aftermath of such events can weigh on us heavily. Our consciences are uneasy. We're uneasy. We know reconciliation will be necessary. And we know how difficult it is at times to be reconciling—to either forgive or to be the one to seek forgiveness.

As the disciples gathered in that upper room two days after Jesus died, I can't even imagine what they could possibly have talked about—their utter failure at the moment when Jesus was most alone had to have robbed them of speech.

So, I imagine them sitting there in a cold silence, with the only thing binding them being the fear that they would be next.

And Jesus comes into their midst. That could have meant their comeuppance. It could have meant Jesus confronting them with the fact that they had done exactly as he predicted they would do.

Instead, Jesus makes the first move. He says, "Peace be with you." He acknowledges what had happened by simply showing them the scars that had been left.

Those scars looked differently now that they appeared on a risen body. Death had indeed done its worst, and yet, there he was.

John says the disciples rejoiced when they saw the

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risen Lord. They probably did more than that. With the rejoicing that Jesus was alive came also the relief that they were alive, too.

Already with his greeting he had restored them. He had brought them back from the dead place of guilt and remorse and isolation. Suddenly, there was a path forward. They were being made whole.

It's unfortunate that Thomas, when he returned to the upper room, could not pick up on the change in atmosphere.

Before anyone said a word, it should have been possible to see that something momentous had happened, that the other disciples had been transformed from the dead men walking he had left into people basking in the glow of life, real life.

When they did speak to him of their experience of the risen Lord, none of that mattered. He was stuck in his guilt and shame and appeared beyond the reach of any good news. As he sees it, only one thing can free him: He must see for himself. Nothing else will do.

Jesus' response to Thomas is consistent. He makes the first the move to fulfill the conditions for reconciliation Thomas has marked out for him: "Go ahead, touch my hands, my side." If that's what you need, I make them available to you." He's not bluffing.

As the encounter comes to its end, Jesus sets up what will be the conditions for future generations: "Believe in the mercy and love of God. It is the way forward."

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Believe that God's love does not waver. It does not hold back. He knocks at the door. He does not make us come to him.

That's really what we celebrate on Divine Mercy Sunday. God's mercy is not like the one who sits with arms folded across his chest, needing to be convinced that we are worth his trouble.

God's mercy is about the one who takes the first step, who is always willing to go the extra mile for the sake of reconciliation. Who could fear knowing that God is that way? Who would not run to him, even in the midst of our stone-cold guilt?

The first thing we must do as Catholic Christians is to firmly fix in our minds and hearts this image of God. If we don't we will never be in a position to proclaim good news.

But if we do, if we really embrace it as the truth, there will be no holding us back from proclaiming from the housetops how great is our God.

Those who will be received into full communion today, have known the former and are now committing themselves to take on the latter.

Thomas's conditions were met, and he believed and accepted the mission: from now on he would fearlessly tell the world of the mercy of God. He knows of it from his own experience and sees why it must be shared.

May our experience of the risen Christ impel us, too,

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to tell our story to whomever will listen, that far and wide the fact of God's famous love will be common knowledge.

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1. All have been involved in encounters that did not go well:

- lost our temper

- caved in

- shied away from what was being asked of us, or offered to us

The aftermath can weigh heavily: uneasy consciences.

We know reconciliation is necessary; know also how hard it is to be reconciling: offering or seeking forgiveness.

2. The disciples: what could they have talked about in that upper room? Their utter failure? Must have been speechless; sitting silence, bound only by their common fear.

3. Jesus comes into their midst: a moment of comeuppance? Confrontation with the fact of their abandonment?

Instead, Jesus makes the first move toward reconciliation: "Peace be with you." Shows them his scars.

They look different now on a resurrected body. Death had done its worst, yet there he was.

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4. John: “the disciples rejoiced.” That and then some. With rejoicing came also relief.

Jesus had brought them back from the dead place of guilt and remorse and isolation. There was a path forward. They were being made whole.

5. Unfortunate that Thomas could not pick up on the change in atmosphere.

It should have been possible to see that something had happened. Transformation from dead men walking to people basking in the glow of new life, real life.

Recalling the event did not matter. T. was stuck in his guilt and shame. Only one thing can free him: He must see for himself.

6. Jesus’ response is consistent: again he makes the first move toward reconciliation. He’s willing to fulfill Thomas’s conditions.

7. He then sets up to conditions for future generations: “Believe in the mercy and love of God.”

Believe that God’s love does not waver. He knocks at the door. He does not make us come to him.

8. What we celebrate on Divine Mercy Sunday.

God needs no convincing that we are worth his trouble.

He’s always taking the first step, going the extra mile. Who could be afraid of someone like that? Who would not run to him?

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9. Job one: fix in our minds and hearts this image of God.

If we don't, we will never proclaim the good news.

If we do, there will be no holding us back.

Those being received into full communion: know that God never gives up on anyone

Commit themselves to giving witness to that experience.

10. Thomas's conditions were met. He believed and accepted the mission.

He knows from his own experience; sees why it must be shared.

May our experience impel us, too, to tell the story

So that God's famous love will become common knowledge.